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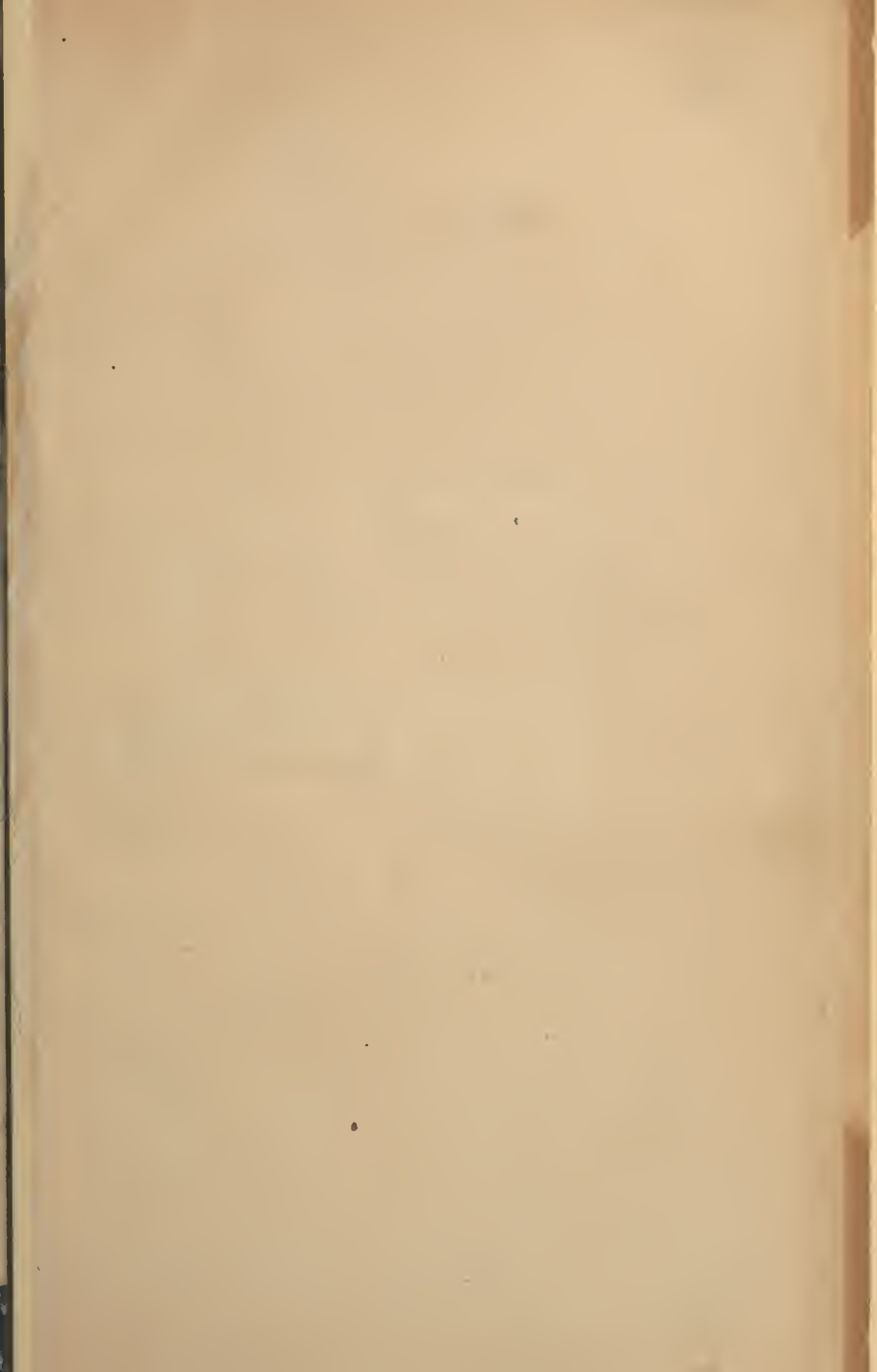
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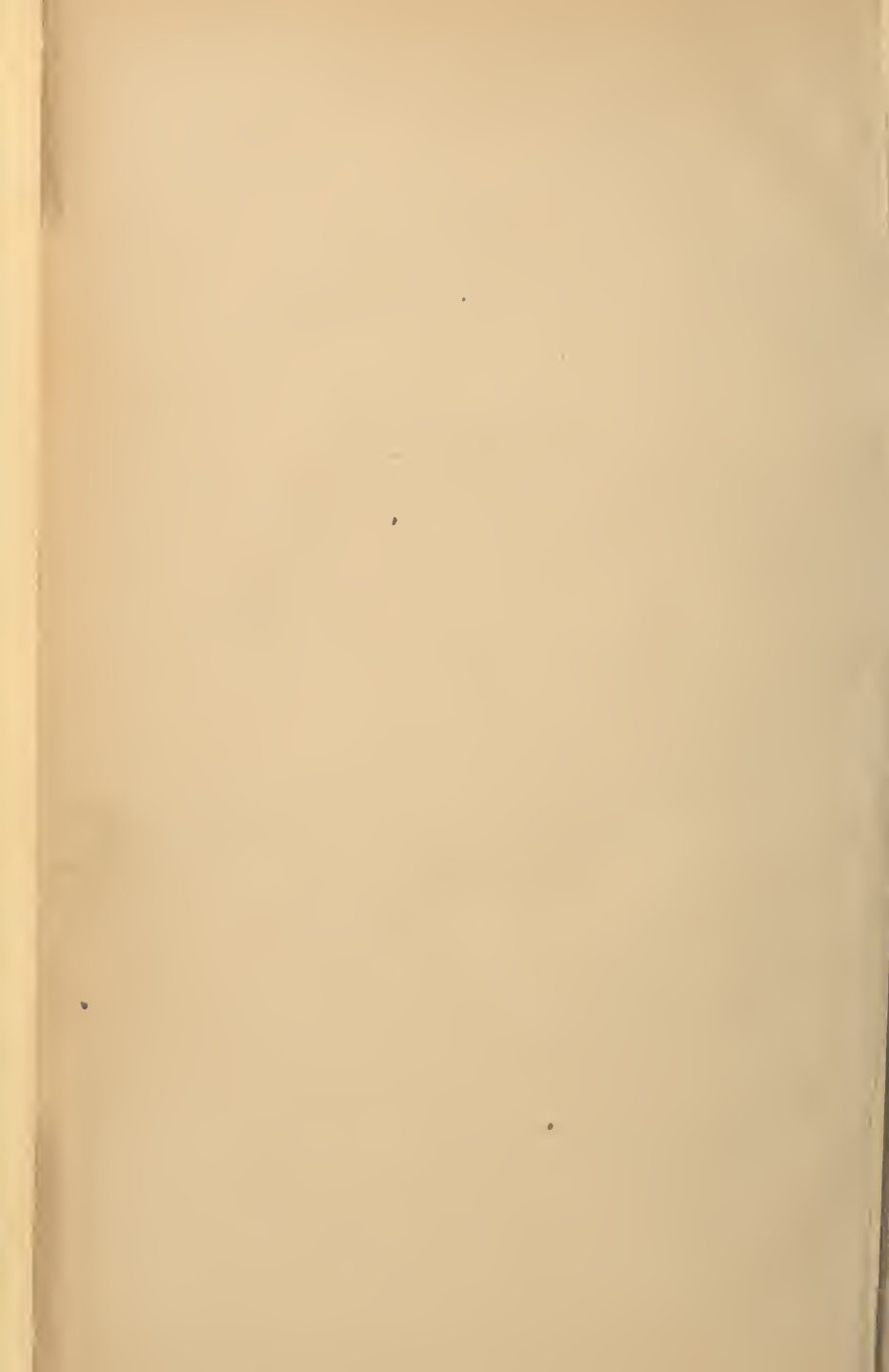
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VALEDICTORY ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

GRADUATED CLASS

OF THE

National Medical College,

(MEDICAL DEPARTMENT OF COLUMBIAN COLLEGE,)

MARCH 2, 1870,

BY

JOHN ORDRONAU, LL. B., M. D.,

Professor of Physiology and Medical Jurisprudence.

WASHINGTON, D. C.:

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CORRESPONDENCE.

NATIONAL MEDICAL COLLEGE,

WASHINGTON, D. C., *March 4, 1870.*

DEAR SIR: At a meeting of the students held on Thursday, March 3d, the undersigned were appointed a committee to solicit for publication a copy of the Valedictory Address delivered by you to the Graduating Class.

In communicating this unanimous expression we have the pleasure to be, with much esteem,

Very respectfully, yours,

H. A. DUNCANSON,
OVERTON TWEEDIE,
W. B. TYLER,
RICHARD JOSEPH,

Committee.

JOHN ORDRONAUX, *M. D.,*

Professor of Physiology and Medical Jurisprudence.

WASHINGTON, *March 5, 1870.*

GENTLEMEN: It affords me great pleasure to comply with your request. The Address was written for you, and the desire to preserve it in an enduring form is a compliment to its sentiments which I highly appreciate.

I am, with feelings of high personal regard,

Very truly, yours,

JOHN ORDRONAUX.

Messrs. H. A. DUNCANSON, W. B. TYLER, O. TWEEDIE, and RICHARD JOSEPH.

ADDRESS.

On an occasion like this, congratulation would seem to be the only proper text for the hour. Fitness suggests it, custom sanctions it, prescription legalizes it. A great labor of preparation has been successfully accomplished; the goal of expectation has been reached; the palms of victory have been distributed, and beneath the eyes of friendship and in the sunshine of popular sympathy, you are made the recipients of a homage which may well flatter the heart of youth and cause it to thrill with novel sensations. At this time, in this place, under these encouragements, it is natural that you should exult. The skies are propitious, the vertical sun casts no shadows, the gateways of hope are all opened, the land of promise is at your feet. Before you lies the world's great field of enterprise, wide as the widest ambition could desire, smiling with harvests which await the reaper's sickle, and rich with rewards for every honest laborer. Behind you is the memory of a long train of well-spent days, that find their consummate fruitage in the ceremonies of this hour. Surely if past labor be sweet, and the retrospect of years can strengthen us by the endorsement of its approbation, how much sweeter far are not all these reflections when culminating in the conviction, that we have climbed to promotion and preferment without soil, without stain, without ungracious subsidy or obsequious homage paid to any one, but only by the grace of God, and through our own unflinching resolution.

Craven indeed, is that spirit which, feeling the nameless power of a divine intelligence within, shall yet hold itself aloof, in dishonorable neutrality, from all participation in the world's great battle-field. On such, no heavenly sunshine, no refreshing dews, no blessings of fruitfulness shall descend. But instead, a desolation like that of Edom will fill the chambers of its soul, and mankind, from an inherent and irrepressible antipathy, will

sweep it out of all brotherhood and communion. Wherever, therefore, in childhood, in youth, in manhood, or old age, an honest effort is made to dignify intellect by development, and to ennoble a man by graduation upwards, the heavens ring with congratulation, the earth catches up the glad sound, and its mountain peaks re-echo it from continent to continent. To you in particular these symbols of congratulation should wear a reverential significance, for they typify an event in your lives which must ever be memorable. It may seem, indeed, only a short paragraph, a mere sentence in fact, in the book of universal history, but it is not wholly insignificant on that account, or destined, let us hope, to be destitute of results. Great—small—what are these terms of human measurement in the eyes of Omniscience? What are they even to us in the shifting relations of life? The Rhine, at its source, in Switzerland, is a stream which a boy might leap over, but, anon, it becomes a majestic flood, sweeping by the shores of empires, and compelling nations, as at the Congress of Vienna, to modify principles of International law, so as to secure the freedom of its navigation. Depend upon it, there is nothing trivial in life, except as we choose to make it so; and to-day in your horoscope, will be noble or trifling, according to the angle of vision under which you behold it, or the purposes of consecration or effervescence to which you devote it.

But this is something more than a mere festival of boys gathered to celebrate their release from the bonds of Academic apprenticeship. It is, or should be, something more than a show to which we have come with music and flowers and all the pomp and circumstance of a ceremonial drama in order to collect a crowd and enact a pageant. Far from it. This is a solemn consecration of your lives, your talents, and your honor to the profession of your adoption. Here you have received the crown and the mantle of your medical investiture; here has been performed the sacred rite of ordaining you into a priesthood, which, although termed secular, yet often extends its ministrations beyond the wants of our material bodies. Nor is it too much to say, that no higher trust can exist between man

and man than that one which confides to his keeping both health and life.

While, therefore, I tender you the greeting appropriate to an hour, so full of majesty and supreme satisfaction, I cannot lose sight of the burdens of responsibility which this mantle of office imposes upon you. In offering you congratulations for the present, and hope for the future, I feel that I am addressing those who know that these things are valuable only when they rest upon solid foundations; and that congratulation, without a basis of merit, or hope without a basis of faith, are like apples of Sodom, which turn to ashes upon the lips. It is very natural to feel proud of one's honest achievements, and to reckon them as so many triumphal days in the march of time; but we should be chary about parading them too precipitately or ostentatiously under the eyes of criticism, lest, perchance, it be discovered that the foundations on which we have built are both weak and unsubstantial, and the victory not so much achieved as borrowed by us. Hence it would be paying a poor compliment to your culture and good taste to assume that you desired me to devote this inauguration occasion to the trivialities of rhetoric, by perfuming you with the incense of conventional laudation. In justice to myself, to the profession, and to you, a different complexion must be infused into my remarks; and, although necessarily they can be only of a general character, relating to general topics, I hope at least to be able to make them interesting enough to outlive the mere period of their delivery.

The world moves in more senses than one, and since that day when the morning stars first sang together, the purposes of creation have been accomplishing themselves in ever-widening circles. The old axis still spins on; the process of the suns calls forth and ripens new events; and every morning brings a fresh resurrection of power, opportunity, and promise. Swifter and more swiftly the world sweeps through each passing epoch. Hardly is it announced before it is accomplished, and curiosity stands on tip-toe to welcome the next coming event. Here, there, everywhere, the dizzy motion makes the nations reel; the

nights grow shorter, the days longer and more feverish, the sunlight more stimulating, the hunger of expectation more consuming. From pole to pole the sympathizing peoples catch the step of this universal movement, shouting to each other, with a voice of multitudinous music:

Forward, forward, let us range;
Let the great world spin *forever* down the ringing grooves of change!
Through the *shadow* of the globe we sweep into the younger day—
Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay!

Through this swift motion, the world has already passed out of the golden and silver ages of the ancient mythology; passed out of that Saturnian era around which poets and philosophers delight to weave pictures of Arcadian simplicity and social bliss. We have passed by the days of poetry and romance, the days of dreaming and monasticism, and now live in the iron age of Positivism. Hereafter our labors must be performed under the searching sunlight of popular criticism, which, just or unjust, allows us no longer to take refuge behind walls, book-shelves, or traditional dogmas. All the great problems in science, however applied, are now tested by the single standard of utility rather than speculation, of practical application rather than assumed authority. Prove everything, is the motto of to-day.

In entering, therefore, upon a professional career at this Age of the world, and in the midst of such gigantic strides as science is daily making, there is much less reason for congratulation than for misgiving—much less reason for self-praise than for prayer and humility, asking that strength may come from on high, in order that self-reliance may spring up within us, and we may keep the lamp of Hope burning as a cheerful beacon in every untried wilderness of endeavor. It is true that we have dethroned Jupiter and Fate, and the Furies of the old Greek tragedy. It is true that the law of Force is being everywhere supplanted by the law of Love which our religion inculcates; but although great Pan is dead, and the oracles are dumb at Delphi and Dodona, yet Eternal justice does not slumber, and its swift messenger, the law of compensation, “with an eye that never winks and a wing that never tires,” follows each mortal

life with sword and scale, both seeking and in turn doing equity. To-day, more than ever, the title of physician should import a natural philosopher, possessed of the fullest measure of serviceable attainments; keeping pace with the progress of his department in everything, and capable of verifying for himself the truth or error, the pretension or the certainty of any new principle, or so-called discovery. If any one fall below this, he is no priest of science admitted to the plenitude of her communion, but a beggar at the refectory gate who has lived upon the bones and crumbs of her charity, too indolent to "scorn delights and live laborious days," that he may earn the honors of full citizenship in the Republic of Arts and Letters.

All the truths that yet remain to be discovered are now in the world. Above, beneath, around, within us, they are constantly signaling their presence by symbols which we do not read, come they never so near to us, and by tokens which we make no effort to interpret, because we are imprisoned by prejudices over whose walls we dare not look. Through all these "hieroglyphics of external shows" the spiritual law executes its mandates in our presence, and yet we see it not, until science and the religious sense combine to unseal our eyes. But it is not to dull indolence, or vapid sciolism, or self-laudatory conceit that Providence permits the discovery of scientific secrets. The treasure houses of nature will open their doors only to those who knock long and loudly, and who will sit as patient suppliants for a lifetime on the threshold of the temple of the Unknown. Earnestness — earnestness — earnestness — now, to-morrow — always, is a far better text for this occasion than empty congratulation. The experience of the world everywhere, and in every age, concurs in the assertion that earnestness is the key of success, and the most fragrant incense which can be burnt upon the altars of labor. Nor, after saying this much, will you be surprised if I should begin with the assumption that you are sincerely in love with that divine profession to which you have just been wedded; that you know its history; that you reverence its canons; that you will maintain its ethics, and do something to perpetuate its fame. That something need not be brilliant

or ostentatious, but, in order to live, it must at least be noble and sweet with that essence of self-forgetfulness and sacrifice which appeals to the future, regardless of present reward.

It needs not the age of a patriarch, nor the wisdom of a seer, to discover that every new sphere of action demands at the outset preparation and a purpose. These are the pledges exacted by that law of natural equity which keeps a running account with every human life. It is the balance held in the hands of Eternal justice pronouncing its decrees upon all without distinction of rank, and pursuing the wrong-doer with a relentless scourge, into palaces as well as hovels. Even as the stars are numbered and weighed and held by immutable laws to their appointed duties, so every existence is registered in some great doomsday-book kept in Heaven's high chancery.

We are not here accidentally. Our lives are not intended to be merely passive and recipient, but active, fruitful, and influential. The imperative to labor somewhere and somehow is upon all. There is no escape from this doom, which carries a covert blessing under its apparent shadow. But whenever a purpose is introduced into the problem of activity, all our faculties become suddenly energized to a degree not hitherto perceived, and we accomplish, simply because we *will* to accomplish. The power of the will, is in our intellectual or moral nature what the power of the sun is in the physical universe. Without this latter there can be no seasons and no harvests; without the former no actions and no progress. And so essential to our mental health and happiness is this exercise of the will, that man, deprived of fields in which to employ it, dwindles intellectually, or driven by disappointment into despair, throws himself into the dominions of vice rather than endure the tortures of idleness. It is not Alexander the Great alone who weeps for new fields to conquer. Absence of occupation is a misfortune when compulsory, but a crime against intellect when self-permitted. From this habitual lethargy the will alone can rouse us, for it is the only power on earth which can break through the obstacles of habit, time, place, and circumstance.

It was this will power which carried Caesar across the Rubi-

con in the teeth of a protesting Senate, and which brought Napoleon back from Elba with a handful of followers to revolutionize empires, by the simple assertion of his sovereign personality. All the great epochs of history have been prefigured in the will of some one man, as in the Hermit Peter we see the Crusades ; as in Wickliffe and Luther we see the Reformation ; as in Hampden and Sidney and Milton we see the English revolution ; as in Washington and Adams we see the spirit of a Republic that was to be.

But for this *will* power, the mind were a chaos, without a ruler to enforce order among its contending faculties. This, indeed, is the key to the riddle of so many fruitless lives, for we too often make our own misfortunes in the presence of the most felicitous opportunities, all the while blaming the stars, society, circumstances, anything in fact which our prejudices may select. But when the ripples of discontent have once subsided, and reason floats anew upon a sea of calm reflection, we are led to a conviction of the utter fallacy of this Materialistic philosophy ; we blush at having worn its shackles with such patient submission ; at having bowed our necks to a yoke of such degrading exaction, and we hasten to collect the shreds of our prostrate manhood for a fresh effort in behalf of human dignity. Let us begin life by casting behind us these old superstitions, these nightmares of antiquity, these mental swaddling clothes spun by the childish brain of Indian sophists, and Persian Magi. We are *freemen* of the whole estate of nature. It is ours to subdue and to enjoy. Every faculty is a power—every power has a field for its exercise. Let us not cringe or tremble, because it thunders, or blows, or rains ; because clouds obscure the sunlight, or darkness descends upon the earth. But let us take the place which belongs to us ; accept the events by which God has surrounded us, turn them to the most honorable advantage, and preach in every act of our lives the gospel of cheerfulness and hope.

As events do not transpire, however, by luck so much as by law, and he who would reap must be willing to sow and water, to toil and to wait with a purpose fixed in the direction of some

definite aim, so we are brought back to the two cardinal pivots of all successful achievement, *preparation* and *a purpose*. It is *with* them that the inception of all good results takes its rise, it is *through* them that a field of action is readily found, and finally it is *by* them that the man can alone become master of the circumstance. Nature never builds by spasms. All her works are the fruit of long, consecutive elaboration. There is no inspiration in the formation of a plant any more than in that of a planet; but everywhere creative purpose acting upon already created instrumentalities. In thousands of years she has produced but one Plato, one Shakespeare, one Newton, among the billions of human beings who have fretted their brief days on the earth. And still her labors continue! Wise men seek to imitate her, as dutiful children a parent. They know her laws, and reverence them in their application to the necessities of life. Hence they practice under that code of equitable justice which teaches them that nothing is to be had for nothing. We get precisely what we pay for, in labor, in patience and in power. Harvey and Jenner and Kepler labored hard and faithfully ere they triumphed; and were past middle life before the world recognized the transcendent merit of their discoveries. Galileo was seventy when he exposed the fallacy of the Ptolemaic system, and was condemned as a heretic for it, by a Council of Cardinals. Time is the element that gives firmness to everything. The oak is the fruit of a century's growth; and the human mind is bound in its productiveness by the same inexorable laws. Spontaneity never discovered a new world, or added durable results to the stores of mankind. There is a system of hard mechanics and unimpassioned method running through the web of our activities, that asserts itself in moments even of apparent inspiration. The divine spirit may be there, but it works nevertheless through instrumentalities, which it thus ennobles, by not disdaining to employ. The secret of doing a thing well, lies in having often done it before, and never coming to it unprepared. It is only by iteration and reiteration, thought, study, practice, that we become masters of our own powers—masters of the situation.

Under those sonorous cadences and silvery strains of Homer and Milton, which lift us into an atmosphere of enrapturing music and self-forgetfulness, there runs a despotic scale of versification, within which the Muse has had to tread with reverential awe. To the popular mind the poet sits upon some Mount of Transfiguration, bathed in the sunshine of the Eternal presence, from which he directly receives, and as directly transmits to listening thousands, the language of a divine allegory. But the poet himself knows better. He knows the long protracted agony of metrical labor; the hard mechanics of legalized measure, and the terrible tractorations of verbal architecture.

Deem not the framing of a deathless lay,
The pastime of a drowsy summer day.

Those smooth lines of Virgil, which flow through you like sunbeams; those noble stanzas of Spenser or Pope or Cowper; those metaphysical gems of Elizabeth Browning, or those sparkling apophthegms of Tennyson, intellectual mosaics set in a framework of transporting imagery, have cost their authors days, weeks, and months of patient, unimpassioned labor. They seem to you spontaneous, when, in fact, they were the fruit of the severest elaboration; and it is that very labor, that filing and refining, that pruning and recasting which has given them transcendent qualities. Such is the price invariably paid for success in any field, nor was ever any man so highly endowed as to be placed above the necessity of compliance with this law.

Concentration of forces and continuous action are the talismans before which every door opens. Labor for what you want and you *shall* get it; but labor in earnest—labor in self-reliance—labor in faith—and the reward (some reward) must come. It is as inevitable as that Destiny which, in ancient mythology, bound even the all-judging Jove in its iron wyths. Nature claims her debts from all; but she also pays us in return, and handsomely. You may safely trust her when Art fails and human courage pales before an impending crisis. The recognition of the constant presence of this guardian angel arms man with both power and dignity, and makes him a victor without knowing exactly how that victory was brought about. Nor, until his spiritual

eye is opened, can he perceive that he owes his triumph to a higher energy than intellect, and a more subtle power than his consciousness can fathom.

I take it to be a generally understood principle in mental philosophy, as well as in mechanics, that the height of a pyramid is ever determined by the breadth of its base; hence the broader and deeper the foundations of knowledge, the higher may the superstructure be carried—the loftier, in fact, *will* it be carried; for it is a law of our nature that the appetite grows from what it feeds upon; and, as all knowledge is absorbent and assimilative, it constantly demands food for itself, and appropriates it according as it is exercised in that habit. All knowledge, too, classifies itself, and very idle it is, therefore, to ask of what use *some* (any particular) branch may be in the aggregate of a whole course of study. Rest assured it is a link which you will miss in the great chain of accomplishment, whenever a strain is put upon it, and you are summoned to weather a sudden storm of responsibility; or, if in that chain some weak and ill-forged link be surreptitiously introduced, although you should paint it over and varnish it with the highest gloss, still, whenever the hour of trial comes, that weak link will fly asunder, the story of its deceitfulness will be exposed, and the man, like a ship with a parted cable, will drift at the mercy of circumstances. What, if in your case this weak link should prove to be in the department of Anatomy or Chemistry, and through a mis-performed surgical operation, or an error in prescribing, some valuable life should be sacrificed as an indisputable proof of your incompetency? Would you not begin to realize then, that in those studies which you have pursued, there is nothing trivial, nothing merely ornamental, and nothing that you can afford to overlook daily, hourly—always? Would you not begin to realize that these studies constituted a professional atmosphere, which you must constantly breathe, if you would live and grow, or, neglecting to do so, incur the risk of shipwreck at every step?

Alas! there are other sins than those mentioned in the Decalogue; sins against consistency—sins against self-respect—sins

against self-reliance—felonies all, committed upon our own personal character; and when carried to their highest consummation, ultimating in mental or moral suicide. I am not so sure that philanthropy and Christian charity are always properly employed when aiding men to compound such felonies as these, by cozening their conceit, and helping them over hard places on cushions of spiritual down. Better, far better, to let them pay the penalty belonging to the offence, since he who has learned that the moral government of the world is based upon law, and not upon chance, has taken an enduring lesson in wisdom. Perhaps too, that bitter experience was the very draught needed to invigorate a tottering character—the very bridge that should carry it, as in the case of St. Augustine and Bunyan, across some difficult strait of life, and place it on a firm table-land of fresh determination.

While it is an undeniable fact that a physician to-day enjoys opportunities for study and improvement such as no previous age ever afforded, it is equally undeniable that, in our country, at least, the standard of medical education has not kept pace with the demands of the century. It is impossible, and therefore unreasonable to ascribe this result to any one particular cause. It belongs in fact to many, and is born of the general rapidity of movement of life here, whether intellectually or whether socially, over the same movement as exhibited in Europe. Our political and social problems work themselves out so rapidly, and with an appearance of success so astounding, that the ordinary laws of development and progress seem, like the telegraphic system of the country, to be exclusively under the control of electricity. While a boy is going through college, a new Territory is organized, a State grows out of it, and in another year the lawyers in its courts are quoting the decisions of their own Appellate tribunals. All this is very much on the principle of the cannon ball which, on the way to its mark, goes through things and not around them. In certain departments of life, this cometary movement may go on for a while longer without interruption to the stability of the commonwealth. So long as there are fresh avenues opened, through which popular

effervescence can find an outlet, what might otherwise prove a fatal shock to the political fabric of society will be distributed in insignificant rumblings throughout the line of general movement. In time, however, there will be limitations found, which must give rise to reactions. There will be warning shocks to our political sympathies, and gradually we shall settle down like other nations who have passed through the disproportioning days of childhood, into an age of maturity and definite organization.

In the current of this great continental movement scientific institutions and ideas have been hurried along with corresponding rapidity. The facility with which commerce and the mechanic arts have progressed, and paved the way for the accumulation of vast fortunes, has produced a national giddiness on the subject of success. Because of the rapid strides made in all avocations dealing alone with material agencies, and the wealth they are seen to add to the treasury of the nation, the liberal professions, which are rated as non-productive in the scale of political economy, have suffered by comparison greatly in public estimation. By a mistaken analogy with the arts, it is falsely concluded that the same rules which apply to them will apply to the professions. It seems to be forgotten that the application of mechanical science, when reduced to practical rules, demands only capital and but little time; while the professions are the fruit of that immutable law of mental development which, like the seasons, cannot change with the changes in social economy. Whatsoever the mind undertakes, it must pass through a spring-time of planting, a summer of flowering, and an autumn of ripening. Hence professional attainments cannot be hurried forward by any forcing process; they must be evolved in obedience to fore-ordained laws which know no change. They are associated, like all the processes of growth, with periods of time, which must be accomplished in longer or shorter stages. But this takes time, and time to-day is an outlaw, whom every one feels himself commissioned to slay. Long periods of study are considered an anachronism in this century of swift events and stirring results. The locomotive is the only type of public opinion.

Inasmuch, also, as the genius of a profession involves the idea of a special class of qualified men, which fact must separate them initially from the masses, and impart more or less of a corporate character to their association, they have come to be regarded as quasi-monopolies and relics of a feudal age, by the ignorant and unlearned.

But these things afford no excuse for neglecting the duties which you owe to the profession and to yourselves. You are in honor bound to live above them; in honor bound to redeem all the pledges which this new life imposes upon you. These pledges, rightly interpreted, mean preparation and proficiency, fidelity in the discharge of your duties to society, and an honorable pride in the profession which has adopted you. No compromise consistent with honor is possible within the sphere of these duties; no compromise with indolence or ignorance, with chicanery or false pretension, with double dealing or personal detraction. Liberality is a crown of grace in all, but a craven concession and surrender of an honest principle to please one man or many, is an abandonment of the pedestal of your manhood; when that is gone then pray for wings, since no spot of earth can ever again afford you a firm foothold.

Therefore, is it, that wisdom enjoins upon you, the duty of the broadest and deepest preparation, a preparation to which every day of life should add something, however humble it may be, in amount. Nor is it sufficient to study merely in the present and the actual, or those authors which are most immediate to us. The old masters have an undying claim upon every succeeding generation. Wisdom is not the exclusive inheritance of any one age, and those who would fit themselves for usefulness in the present, or would build up systems for the future, must compare past things with present, must respect and be instructed by the labors of the wise who have preceded them. The Romans took their models from the Greeks, the Greeks from the Phœnicians or Egyptians, and the western nations of Europe have not disdained to imitate the masters of the Ancient World. Aristotle and Euclid still furnish us invaluable text-books; the Pandects of Justinian, and the Institutes of Caius,

still animate the jurisprudence of continental Europe. Cicero remains, as he ever must, the great philosophical teacher of statesmen and jurists in every age, as Plato does of moralists. And Homer, in each generation, finds some daring imitator, who, at immeasurable distance, attempts to translate his grandiloquent utterances. Yet no bard of ancient or modern times save Milton alone, has had a pinion strong enough to bear him to those Olympian heights of imagery where Homer sits enthroned without a peer in Epic grandeur.

Nor, if you turn to the annals of your own profession will you find less occasion to admire the labors of the old masters. It is manifestly unjust to compare the physical sciences of our day, and the men distinguished in them, with the mere glimmerings of similar knowledge possessed by the ancients. No parallel, in fact, can be run between them. Still, judged by the light of their times, Hippocrates and Galen and Celsus stood in their day much higher than ever Boerhaave or Sydenham did in theirs. And as we follow the chronology of the Medical Fathers down to modern times, we are struck with the superior wisdom of these elders who, unaided by collateral sciences which now furnish such assistance to medicine, had to grope their way through the darkness of wholly unexplored regions. Under this aspect of their lives, their labors rise in merit to a degree which I could hardly describe without incurring the charge of exaggeration. But it is to the physicians of the Middle Ages in particular, Arabian, Italian, French, English, Dutch, that we owe the foundations of modern medicine. In the schools established by them at Salerno, Paris, Bologna, and Montpellier, they collected the learning of the Greeks, Saracens, and Romans, thus transmitting the canons of their art as a didactic system, calculated to preserve orthodoxy of principles by hereditary succession. Brave old enthusiasts, they tolerated no lukewarmness or half-hearted allegiance in their pupils, but compelled them to study seven years before they could be admitted to an examination, and, when finally graduated, required of them an oath on the Holy Evangelists that they would keep the faith in medicine as originally delivered. The times have indeed changed since then, as also

the standard of knowledge, but whatever the degree of ours, we cannot yet afford to be ignorant of the labors of these pioneers. For they teach us to be wary of pretenders and empty philosophers in medicine, who come heralded by the announcement of new revelations to mankind. They teach us to balance an honest and liberal conservatism against the tedious talk of reformers and the senseless chatter of sentimental sages.

But aside from these remote chapters in medical history, which serve to point a moral for us, there are some nearer home to awaken your pride in the land of your birth. Although it is less than a century since we began an independent political existence, our medical annals present some names which shine with transcendent lustre; names not only inscribed on tablets in the temple of Medicine, but which the muse of history and the gratitude of a nation will never permit to die. It is not often that we hear mentioned now the name of David Ramsay of South Carolina, physician, statesman, historian. And yet he was one of those patriot orators of the Revolution who did much to fire the hearts of his fellow-citizens. Distinguished for general scholarship and public spirit, he not only took part in the active movements of his day, but wrote the history of the revolution in his own State, and later, a general history of our revolutionary struggle. His career as a physician, though high, was ennobled by the wider range he gave it as a statesman; and his various writings attest the jealous patriotism with which he revered his country's fame. No American physician has ever equalled him in that high range of philosophical inquiry which is essential to successful historical composition. The learned Cooper, who was a jurisconsult as well as a physician, is the only one who could have followed him into this field. For he was the compiler of the first edition of the Statutes at Large of South Carolina, and re-translated besides, the Institutes of Justinian.

Contemporaneous with Ramsay was Benjamin Rush, the elegant and accomplished medical scholar of his day, who, with an ardor which age could not abate, lectured for *forty-four* years at the University of Pennsylvania. Like all the scholars of the revolutionary period, Rush was an active patriot and a mem-

ber of the Continental Congress ; nor did his public duties cease there, for he was subsequently in the State Legislature, and for many years Superintendent of the Mint. Yet, with all this, he found time for authorship, and *seven* volumes bear witness to the fertility of his pen. To that same stirring period of our history belong the names of Josiah Bartlett and Matthew Thornton, the first of whom was among the original framers of the Articles of Confederation—those “founders of empire” to whom Lord Bacon assigns the first place in the gratitude of mankind. The second was Governor of New Hampshire at a time when only the highest merit could aspire to such a position; and to have selected a physician to fill it was evidence that, like Ramsay and Rush and Bartlett, he was something more than a mere prescriber of drugs and medical haberdasher.

But foremost among this bright galaxy of Revolutionary physicians, because wearing the martyr’s crown of self-sacrifice, stands, by universal consent, the name of Joseph Warren! Looking at him by the light of contemporaneous history, his fame is eclipsed by none of the early patriots of that day, and had his life been spared who can doubt that in the councils of the nation he would have vindicated the promises of his early manhood?

He also was an orator, and by the fervor of his eloquence inflamed the people of Massachusetts to open defiance of the British Crown. Twice he delivered the oration on the anniversary of the Boston massacre, the last time, in particular, in the face of such tremendous opposition, that no one dared to undertake the task which he solicited and successfully accomplished, despite the threats of his enemies, who had assembled to overawe him. When James Otis and John Adams were thundering against the encroachments of the mother country, and Patrick Henry, in Virginia, had thrown down the gauntlet of defiance in words that would have driven an Athenian crowd to Marathon, Warren was fanning the movement of the impending tragedy. He was the Hampden of our Revolution, and, like his illustrious prototype, fell too early in the struggle to witness the consummation of the great epic he had helped to inaugurate.

The tall shaft on Bunker's Hill which marks the spot and tells the tale of the great fray which ushered in the independence of the American colonies, amid all the touching reminiscences it awakens, excites no emotion superior to that with which the eye beholds at its base the humble stone bearing these words of immortal significance, *Here Warren fell!*

These were, indeed, brilliant lives; and the theatre of their activities was one well calculated to adorn them with a halo of splendor. They had kings and armies and governments for pawns on that political chess-board, and nations as spectators of the issues at stake. It is not often, indeed, that physicians are called upon to take such active part in public affairs; and yet, when the emergency arises, they should rise with it to the highest necessities of existing events, even though it should lead them to another Bunker Hill.

But there are other lives, less conspicuous it is true, though not less noble, in the annals of our medical biography, deserving the highest commendation, and furnishing the best models for your imitation. Men who have struggled against adversity not only without aid, but without sympathy; who have endured, uncomplainingly, poverty and all its depressing incidents, have resisted every temptation to swerve from the path of duty they had marked out, and, more difficult yet, have kept their courage bright and their faith untarnished while passing through the probationary years of their professional development. Alas! how many men have repeated in their own lives some of those bitter chapters of the Odyssey over which we have wept, as we followed the "tempest-tossed exile" in his struggles with adversity.

From among these examples of truly great men, I select one in particular, who had no superior as a physician and surgeon in his day, and was, in fact, called the "Father of New England Surgery." I allude to Nathan Smith. A farmer's boy at the age of twenty-four, he became inspired with a desire to study medicine from accidentally witnessing a surgical operation. Repelled at the outset by the want of an academic education, he resolutely set himself to study, slowly fought his way along to his

profession, and began practice with nothing but his native resolution and a high moral purpose. After several years practice, desirous still farther to perfect his knowledge, he went to Edinburgh, where, as a simple student, he submitted himself to the ordinary curriculum of the day. Of his various and manifold labors, it is sufficient to say that he established the Medical School at Dartmouth College, where, for several years, he (*alone*) taught all the branches of Medicine and Surgery; that he became Professor in the Medical Department of Yale College and at the University of Vermont, and had at one time the largest practice in New England. If any man, in our land of manifold advantages, ever began life with everything against, and nothing to encourage him, it was he.

Such a life as that—such a model for all—it is pleasant to gaze upon; yet it is one by no means exceptional. History constantly repeats itself. In all directions there are men toiling against adversity the same to-day as yesterday. The law of this necessity will not be suspended to accommodate any one. It is only some antinomian Sybarite who seeks to evade its obligations. But great are the rewards which it brings—lasting the fame which it builds up. Think of the unborn millions that are yet to rise and praise and reverence Jenner, and to hand his name down through every coming century until time shall be no more. Think of the thousands in whose behalf Morton continues to disarm pain, and to render a surgical pillow one of roses and sweet forgetfulness! Think of the sad victims of mental shipwreck whom the labors of Conolly have redeemed from dungeons and chains, by infusing a new element of treatment into Asylums, which has made them to-day one of the chief glories of our civilization. No longer is Medicine impotent before Insanity; and the tortured Macbeth, if present, would not long have to wait to find many who could minister successfully to a mind diseased. Are not these, monuments more lasting than brass or Egyptian pyramids—monuments which the carking tooth of time will in vain assail.

In the most brilliant public place of Enrope stands the obelisk of Luxor, snatched from the ruins of antiquity to deck the

triumphs of a gorgeous civilization. I have seen it when the pale beams of an August moon silvered for the millionth time its old hieroglyphies, as they repeated the story of those days of Egyptian grandeur during which the hundred-gated Thebes poured forth her swarming multitudes to the worship of Osiris. And there it stood, grand, gloomy, awful, as on that penitential night when the Angel of Death passed over the land, and wailing was heard at every fireside. There it stood, the same as Pharaoh and Cambyzes and Moses may have seen it, casting its shadow upon a gay populace, dizzy with the hilarity of a national festival. In its presence one feels as though he stood before the open grave of the centuries where, through all the accumulated dust of human hearts and human hopes, this single survivor ereets his defiant crest against the encroachments of Time. All the events recorded by it relate only to the glories of a Pagan worship, or the triumphs of despotic supremacy. But nothing which relates to the elevation of humanity, nothing to the development of those virtues, public or private, without which the sky were a blank, the earth a heap of ashes, and Heaven but the invention of a poetical imagination. Such are the records which the world admires and hastens to inscribe in the pages of history.

But there is another side to this splendor. There are other records yet to be written here below, compared with which all the peerage of Assyria and Egypt, and all the victories of Sesostris

"Are but as dust that rises up
And is lightly laid again."

In the College of Physicians and Surgeons, in New York, there is an humble mural tablet dedicated to the memory of a score of brave young students who fell victims to a sweeping pestilence while discharging their duties in the wards of its various hospitals. Unheralded by drum or trumpet or banners, or the shouts of sympathizing multitudes, they went down into their pestilential battle-field, knowing that there was no escape from the shafts of that unerring marksman, Death. And night after night they kept their dismal watch, and went their lonesome

rounds in those fever-stricken wards, ministering to the sick and dying, in obedience to their divine mission. Slowly, one by one, each fell himself a victim to that pestilence from which he had sought to save a fellow-being. Unflinching to the last, each in turn took his place in that army of noble martyrs whose record is in the keeping of the Seraphim.

No obelisk in any public place hands down the story of those heroic names ; no bronze tablets arrest the attention of a dizzy crowd, or make it pause in mid-career to sigh over the fate of those young braves. Only on that humble, inconspicuous stone seen by few on earth, does the visitor read the epic of this great martyrdom. Nor do they need pyramid, obelisk, or monumental bronze, to perpetuate their memory. A good deed can never die. It is a possession for all time. Caught up by rejoicing angels, it is "syllabled on tongues of air by rocks and woods and lonely mountain sides." It is repeated at evening firesides ; it is sung at national festivals ; it is quoted by poets and orators ; and, like an universal intuition, it awakens an echo in every human heart. Looking from the proud obelisk of Luxor to that humble mural tablet, let me ask you on which you would prefer to have your name inscribed ?

Such, gentlemen, are the immortal examples which your profession holds up for your emulation. If, therefore, I have succeeded in impressing upon you the essential dignity of a liberal profession ; if I have succeeded in convincing you that it is an intellectual Republic, requiring of its citizens purity, patriotism and industry, then I shall have discharged my whole duty to you and to the profession. Then, indeed, I shall have started you from the golden mile-stone of to-day in the path to honor and fame ; then I shall have taught you to look trustingly towards that bounteous future, whose golden hours encircling the chariot of the sun, are still advancing to crown you with daily mercies.

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BY

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